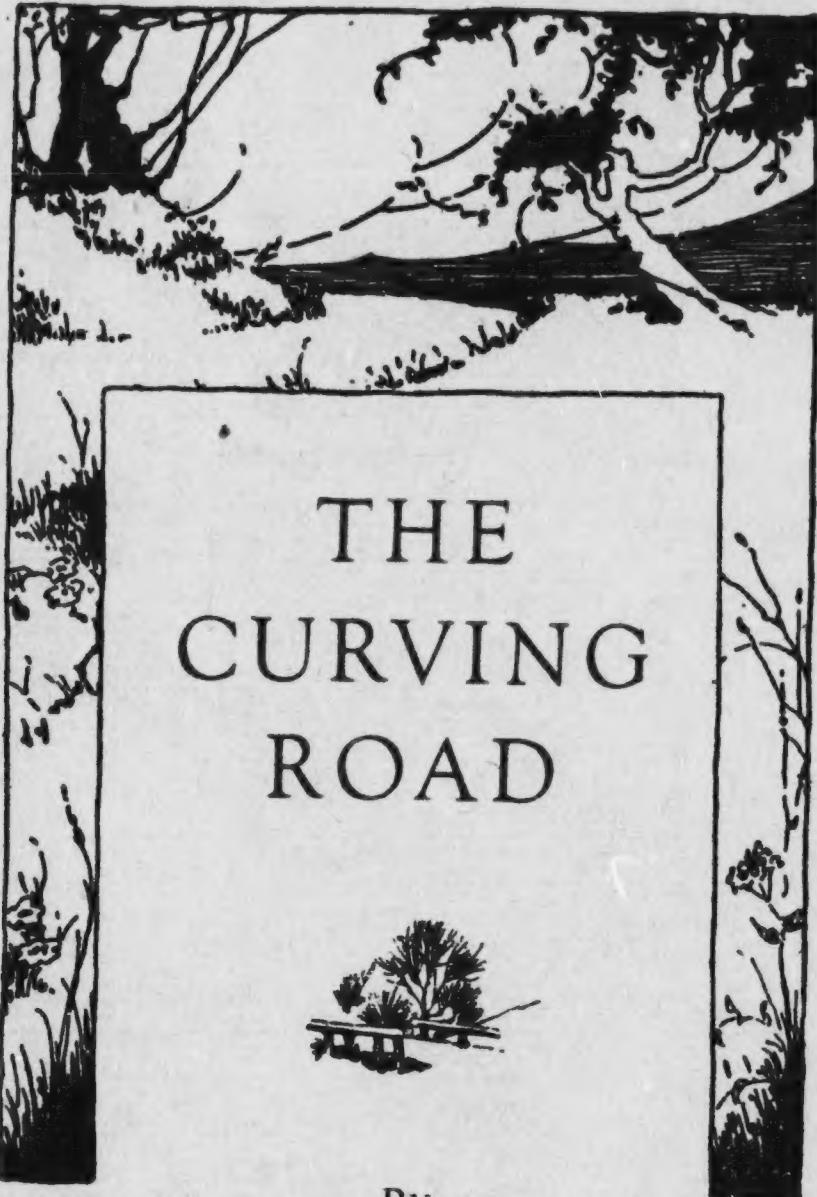


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THE
CURVING
ROAD



By

GEORGE HERBERT CLARKE



THE CURVING ROAD



LONG a hot and sandy road a solitary man was walking, bowed with fatigue and with the weight of a few poor bundled goods that swung heavily from a stick held across his shoulder. And, as he walked, the sand clogged his feet and the sun scorched his face, and he faltered and sighed and sat down by the roadside to rest, for the way was very long.

While he sat thus, tired and idle, a murmuring whisper came at length and touched his ear, saying: "Look before you!"

And he looked, and beheld a sharp curve in the road.

Musing for a while upon this, he was heartened, and took up his bundle, and arose, and walked on.

And he turned the curve, and found the grade easier to his feet, the roadbed firmer, the trees on either side inclining their branches together, the air fresher and sweeter. And his pace quickened, and he broke into a song.

Again the road curved before him.

When he had turned the curve, he saw a valley lying deep and wide, rich green, and rolling, and silvered with shining streams; and he breathed slow and free, and gazed smilingly at that valley, and descended into it.

And in the village below he dwelt peacefully overnight.

On the morrow he renewed his journey, pressing up the steep road opposite, and finding it broken and stony and sheer. But he strove on, because he was refreshed.

At times, when the way seemed impassable for steepness, behold! the road would curve, and he and it would go on together.

There came at last a time when he had reached the end of his journey, and lay meditating. And a doubt disquieted him:—

“The road has curved so often that perchance I have travelled in a circle. Am I then back thither whence I set out?”

Whereupon he was troubled in spirit, and called for a close map of all that country. And he looked and saw that although the curves were many, they took not always a constant direction, but regarded each the being of the others, as the hills and valleys did; so that the way was upward, though often down; and straight, though winding.

And he thought long on his journey.





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